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SUBJECT: MOLDOVA: EIGHTH ANNUAL TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (TIP) REPORT

REFS: A. STATE 02731, B. 07 STATE 150188, C. 07 Chisinau 1354

Introductory Notes

1. (U) Responses are keyed to questions in ref A, which requests
post's contribution to the eighth annual Trafficking in Persons
(TIP) Report.

2. (SBU) Summary: Anti-TIP efforts in the Republic of Moldova
mostly were undertaken by NGOs and international organizations
(IOs), primarily because of the Government of Moldova's (GOM's)
funding and staffing constraints. (Note: The following entities
cited in this report receive U.S. Government funding: UNDP, Winrock
International, Catholic Relief Services, and the International
Organization for Migration, or IOM. The USG supports the
development of the GOM's Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons
(CCTIP). End note.) These NGOs and IOs have the money, the
educated staff, and time to devote their undivided attention to the
effort. We are seeing some progress towards the GOM's assumption of
responsibilities which are the monopoly of government:
investigation, arrests, inter-agency cooperation, and case
management. However, prosecution efforts, especially those which
should be directed at high officials allegedly complicit in
trafficking, continue to lag. GOM anti-TIP actions are being
concentrated at the CCTIP, the GOM lead agency in anti-trafficking
efforts.

3. (SBU) The government, at the national and local level, used the
National Referral Mechanism to coordinate prosecution, protection
and prevention. Government-appointed social workers and teachers,
working with religious leaders, NGOs and National Referral system
multi-disciplinary teams, were involved in prevention of trafficking
and giving assistance to victims. In mid-2007, the Ministry of
Social Protection, Family, and Child (MSP) began to co-chair with
the OSCE Mission the monthly Technical Coordination Meetings (TCMs).
At TCMs, NGOs, the government, international organizations, and
foreign embassies make presentations on their work and coordinate
efforts.

4. (SBU) However, the government has not undertaken prosecution of a
government official allegedly complicit in trafficking, and it has
not informed the international community whether investigations have
provided insufficient evidence to permit a prosecution. In
addition, the GOM has not made any direct reply to USG requests for
information about prosecutions, and did not, until February 2008,
fulfill its legal duty to appoint a chair at the Deputy Prime
Minister level for the National Committee. Statistics on the GOM
website (www.gov.md) for social protection and prosecutions for
crimes cover the period from 1998 through 2005. End summary.

5. (SBU) The GOM's active participation with NGOs in the fight
against TIP contrasts with the apathy shown by left-bank
Transnistrian authorities (especially at the higher levels of
administration) to the NGOs which are active in anti-trafficking
efforts.

6. (SBU) Figures for the number of trafficking victims can only be
estimated. Under the common assumption that 70 percent of cases go
unreported, IOM's figure of 2,286 victims assisted between 2000 and
2007 translates to 7,620 victims, or slightly more than 1 percent of
the 750,000 Moldovans working abroad, according to a 2007 Gallup
poll extrapolation. Using the figure of 400,000 abroad, derived
from a household survey conducted for IOM and the Swedish
Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in July and August of 2006,
1.9 percent of Moldovans working abroad were victims of trafficking.
(Note: The percentage of unreported cases may be even higher. IOM
notes that it had to seek out victims actively: only four victims
out of 295 assisted in 2006, and only three out of 273 in 2007 were
"self-identified" as victims. End note.)

Overview of Country's Activities to Eliminate TIP

17. (SBU) Moldova remained a major source country for trafficked persons, particularly women and girls. It was also to a lesser extent a transit country, and there were some reported cases of

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internal trafficking, often of girls from rural areas, to the capital Chisinau. Only isolated cases of trafficking to Moldova as a destination country have been reported.

18. (SBU) In 2007, IOM assisted 274 victims, including 33 minors, and dealt with 342 persons who were at immediate risk of being trafficked. (Of the 274 victims IOM assisted, 12 were also aided by NGO La Strada. The number of victims that both IOM and La Strada helped remained small, but IOM predicts that numbers will probably rise as victim-assistance organizations cooperate more.) Between 2002 and 2007, La Strada assisted 387 victims, 95 percent of whom were women, at its drop-in center. During 2007, La Strada identified 290 presumed trafficking cases from 679 screened hotline calls (out of a total of 3,581 calls received during the year), and opened 74 social-assistance cases as a result. (For comparison, La Strada opened 100 cases in 2005, and 130 in 2006. No cause for the lower 2007 number has been identified.) According to IOM, 58 percent of Moldovan trafficking victims in 2007 came from rural areas of the country, 34 percent from urban areas other than the capital, and 5 percent from the capital city of Chisinau. (Note: IOM statistics do not always add up to 100 percent because some categories are not reported by victims, and because post is excluding nugatory figures for reasons of space. End note.) La Strada reported that 35 percent of those it assisted between 2002 and 2007 came from Chisinau, 11 percent from Transnistria, and the rest from other parts of the country. According to IOM, young women between the ages of 18 and 24, particularly from impoverished villages, were at greatest risk for trafficking.

19. (SBU) IOM reported that 13 percent of the victims assisted in 2007 were under 18; 62 percent were between 19 and 29, 18 percent between 30 and 40, and 7 percent were over 40. Other IOM statistics for 2007 note victims' educational levels (65 percent with a ninth-grade education, 14 percent high school/professional, 5 percent with university education, and 6 percent with primary education or less); marital status (68 percent single, 14 percent married); sex of recruiter (37 percent men, 48 percent women); relationship of recruiter to victim (friend 23 percent, acquaintance 43 percent, stranger 25 percent, relative 5 percent); type of exploitation (sex 64 percent, labor 22 percent); and destination (Turkey 40 percent, Russia 22 percent, UAE 11 percent, Ukraine 6 percent). In January 2008, La Strada reported that Russia, Turkey, and the UAE were the top destination countries of victims it assisted in 2006 and 2007. According to La Strada's 2007 hotline statistics, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine were the countries most often mentioned by potential victims seeking counseling.

110. (SBU) According to La Strada and Winrock, 70 to 90 percent of victims had already suffered some form of physical or sexual abuse at home, and were willing to face significant risk to escape unbearable circumstances in their families. According to La Strada, 66 percent of those it served were recruited by someone known to the victim (friends or relatives), and 76 percent were sexually exploited. According to IOM, most Moldovan victims were trafficked as a result of false promises of work abroad. La Strada noted that 83 percent of victims were lured into trafficking by false job promises.

111. (SBU) A significant amount of trafficking, both from and through, occurred in the breakaway region of Transnistria, a small area in the east of Moldova that has declared itself an independent republic and established its own "border control." La Strada's figure of 11 percent of victims it assisted from the region corresponded to the region's 12.8 percent of the country's population. The Moldovan central government has no control over activity, criminal or otherwise, in Transnistria, where the only major effort to fight trafficking in persons was under the aegis of NGOs.

112. (SBU) In 2007, in addition to the Transnistrian NGO Interaction, which has worked in this field for nearly three years, counter-trafficking prevention activities were also implemented by the NGOs Resonance and Step Forward. Interaction managed a hotline, set up in March 2006 and sponsored by the IOM, to identify existing and potential trafficking in persons cases. The hotline received 1,269 calls in 2007: 872 asked about the legitimacy of overseas job offers, and 265 were SOS calls. As a result of the SOS calls, Interaction opened 31 social-assistance files. During 2007,

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Interaction conducted 267 seminars in urban schools and 33 in rural schools, reaching an audience of 5,784.

113. (SBU) While local authorities in Transnistria do not actively hinder NGO efforts, they provide no support, because they are often unwilling to acknowledge that trafficking is a problem in the region. A few officials say that attempts to deal with the problem only tempt those who were previously unaware of the situation to consider being trafficked as a good source of income. According to the OSCE Mission to Moldova, other Transnistrian officials are in favor of a law or other institutional protection against trafficking. As a result of data provided to Transnistrian officials from hotline reports, IOM has noted that more local Transnistrian officials are acknowledging that trafficking exists in the region, although at a lower rate than in the rest of Moldova. Such inconsistencies arise because official responses to trafficking in the Transnistrian region are difficult to monitor, and because

the "government" in Transnistria apparently has not coordinated its opinions and efforts.

¶14. (SBU) Looking at future trends, IOM predicts that the summer 2007 drought, and the generally difficult economic situation in the region, will result in a new wave of migration in 2008, most likely leading to an increase in human trafficking.

¶15. (SBU) There were no reliable numbers regarding the number of persons trafficked from Moldova. Data from the 2004 census (which did not cover the separatist-controlled Transnistria region) indicated that approximately 367,000 Moldovans of a population of 3,388,000 were then outside of the country. (Note: In comparison to more up-to-date figures, this appears to have been a serious undercounting. A household survey conducted for IOM and the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in July and August of 2006 estimated that Moldovan migrants at the end of 2005 numbered 400,000. The highest figure, 750,000, came from an extrapolation made from a 2007 Gallup poll. Some of these people are victims of trafficking, while most are voluntary economic migrants. (See note on trafficking estimates and percentages in para. 6.) Unfortunately, a system for identification and referral of victims is not yet well developed, and the true extent of the trafficking phenomenon is therefore not known.

¶16. (SBU) Information on trafficking from the IOM was perhaps the most reliable as to the numbers and demographics of victims. In May 2007, the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) conducted a survey on anti-trafficking efforts in Moldova, following which the Ministry for Social Protection, Family, and Child (MSP) assumed responsibility for the national victim-centered database. In December 2007, the ICMPD delivered a computer and software for use by the National Coordinating Unit in the MSP, which will coordinate all data collection for the National Referral System.

¶17. (SBU) The CCTIP and Prosecutor General Office (PGO) kept records of the trafficking cases with which they worked. The OSCE kept comprehensive information on organizations providing assistance. The Center for Prevention of Trafficking in Women (CPTW) also provided information on repatriated victims and legal services that have been provided to them, but this information was sporadic. OSCE, the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA-CEELI), and the Embassy's Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) remained the best sources for information on legislative reform in the trafficking area.

General Overview of the Situation in the Country -----

¶18. (SBU) Moldovan victims are trafficked to Russia and countries of the Middle East. Turkey remained the leading destination country in 2007, partly because of the large number of non-stop flights between Chisinau and Istanbul. IOM reported that Moldova continued to serve as a hub for trafficking because of corruption, the unstable border situation, and the ease with which real or fake documents can be produced. Several organizations also reported increasing sex tourism to Moldova. Because of ease of travel, and the efforts of particular travel organizations, clients usually came from Turkey. Turkish investment was also prominent in Moldova's hospitality industry.

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¶19. (SBU) The International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC) reported that in many cases of child trafficking the traffickers were Roma. Some of the women recruiters had been trafficking victims themselves. According to news reports, some women victims were allowed to return home, but only if they recruited and brought back a "replacement" to the destination country. In some cases, minors have been sold by their families.

¶20. (SBU) According to IOM and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, trafficking victims were increasingly being transported by plane to the destination countries, using genuine documents. Some traveled willingly, believing that they were going to legitimate jobs. Experts associated with the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) reported that small groups of victims were placed on buses and planes along with tourists and migrant workers. One of the passengers, unknown to the victims, checked them constantly.

¶21. (SBU) The government continued to state that the fight against trafficking in persons was a national priority, but it spent very little of its own money on combating trafficking, asserting budget constraints; however, projects favored by the government, such as the Center for Combating Economic Crime and Corruption, are well-housed and funded. High-level GOM officials rarely addressed the issue of trafficking publicly, a fact which IOM attributed in part to a reluctance to call attention to the stigma of being a major source country of trafficking victims. The National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which consists of deputy ministers from all relevant ministries and departments, held three meetings in 2007 and had no visible effect on GOM anti-TIP efforts.

¶22. (SBU) In 2005, the Moldovan parliament passed a new law to address comprehensively all aspects of the crime of trafficking. In 2007, the government made a series of efforts to implement the law. The IOM reported that the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child (MSP) had provided staff and facilities to assist victims of trafficking. At the end of 2007 the MSP committed 512,000 Moldovan lei (approximately USD 44,300) from its budget to fund the activities of the Chisinau Rehabilitation Center in 2008; the center helps victims of trafficking.

123. (SBU) At the end of 2006, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration (MFA) opened information centers on trafficking in persons in Moldovan embassies abroad and appointed counter-trafficking focal points at Moldovan diplomatic missions in major destination countries.

Agents behind Trafficking

124. (SBU) Information provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs Anti-Trafficking Unit and the Anti-Trafficking Section of the Prosecutor General Office indicated that the vast majority of trafficking cases investigated were initiated by low-level freelance criminals, usually "mom-and-pop" organizations involving a woman recruiter and her husband or pimp. However, in 2007 the CCTIP reported the arrest of two leaders of two different, larger, criminal groups, charging each with trafficking 16 persons, including minors, for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Those arrested faced 16-25 years in jail under Article 284 of the Criminal Code, which deals with setting up or leading a criminal organization. In addition, international experts working for EUBAM noted that individuals who are trafficked by freelance criminals quickly came under the control of larger criminal gangs, inside Moldova and in destination countries. Only these gangs have the money and influence needed to provide contacts, documents, places to live and work, and protection from police and immigration authorities.

125. (SBU) Travel and tourism companies were sometimes involved in trafficking; the Moldovan government shut down some companies for such illegal activities. However, it was widely suspected that the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Anti-Trafficking Unit was self-limiting in the cases it investigated because of pressure, tacit or overt, from corrupt or complicit officials at higher levels in the ministry and government. On October 18, 2006, the Ministry of Interior dismissed several senior officials for trafficking,

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including a former CCTIP deputy director, Ion Bejan, who was under investigation on charges of protecting a major trafficker, Alexandr Covali. The GOM has not reported any progress in the Bejan case.

126. (SBU) We received no reports of trafficking profits being channeled to armed groups, terrorists or banks. We note that judges are among the most vulnerable to corruption and some may accept bribes, possibly from proceeds of trafficking, to acquit criminals.

Limitations on the GOM's Ability to Address the Problem

127. (SBU) Corruption continued to pervade all sectors of Moldovan government and society. Although we have no hard numbers on the extent to which government officials are complicit in trafficking crimes, there were reports from victims that some border guards and police officers have been complicit in the crime or have taken bribes to turn a blind eye to such activities. Most of these reports were limited to low-level officials. During 2007, the CCTIP reported eight bribery attempts by suspects seeking to have cases closed or dismissed.

128. (SBU) Moldova remained the poorest country in Europe, and financial constraints affected the entire government bureaucracy. Little government money was spent to aid victims. Substantial technical assistance from the United States and other NGO and IO donors has had a positive impact. When the CCTIP encounters trafficking victims, its officers direct them to NGOs who can provide legal counsel, vocational training, and reintegration services.

129. (SBU) The government had no other programs specifically to assist victims. Several NGOs offered repatriation assistance, temporary housing, and medical care for victims, as well as job training. The NGO Save the Children worked with trafficking victims, particularly repatriated girls. The NGO La Strada Moldova provided informational and educational services as well as a national toll-free hotline. Catholic Relief Services offered employment training and job placement for women at risk. Winrock International has established four regional support centers to provide former victims and young women at risk with assistance, including training in trafficking awareness, leadership, employment, vocational skills, and entrepreneurship, as well as confidential individual psychological, legal, and job-placement consultations.

130. (SBU) According to UNICEF, only 68 social workers were hired between 2003 and 2006. In 2007, however, 542 social workers were hired from the state budget to work in 467 communities throughout Moldova, including villages, where the most disadvantaged children live--71 percent of poor children live in villages, as well as 70 percent of children left behind by migrant parents. All of the social workers have received specialized training in identifying and working with vulnerable children, and receive regular updates from professionals, academics, and government offices.

Extent of Systematic Government Monitoring

131. (SBU) The National Committee has the lead role in reviewing the government's anti-trafficking efforts, and it continued to hold meetings, which were open to NGOs and the international community. Representatives from various ministries, raions and civil society make presentations on their efforts at these meetings. In 2007, three National Committee meetings were conducted in urban hubs to accommodate as many regions as possible; information on GOM anti-trafficking efforts is posted on the Ministry of Interior

website, and disseminated in the print media, and on national and regional television and radio. From June 2007 to January 16, 2008, when Victor Stepaniuc was appointed Deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for social affairs, the Committee lacked a chair of Deputy Prime Minister rank, as required by law. It also lacks a permanent secretariat to carry out administrative functions. However, in December, the GOM made a commitment to provide premises for, and NGOs and international organizations pledged funds to run, the secretariat. The CCTIP released figures regarding counter-trafficking investigations, convictions and sentences.

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Government Support of Other Programs

132. (SBU) The National Employment Agency of the Ministry of Economy and Trade continued to provide vocational training free of charge to at-risk persons and returned trafficking victims referred by IOM. It distributed information to potential victims about the job market and taught them how to prepare a resume, how to apply for a job, and how to handle a job interview, in addition to informing them about their rights and about job placement opportunities.

133. (SBU) In June 2005, parliament passed an amendment to the Law on Employment and Social Protection, which now allows all categories of vulnerable youth from 16 to 18 years of age (graduates of residential institutions, orphans, children without parental care, children from one-parent families, victims of trafficking, disabled persons, persons released from penitentiaries and beneficiaries of rehabilitation institutions) to receive government benefits. Before this amendment, children between the ages of 16 and 18 were no longer covered by the educational and housing services of the Ministry of Education, but were not yet entitled to receive the benefits provided by the Ministry of Economy and Trade, such as unemployment or vocational training.

134. (U) In November 2006, IOM and four Christian denominations in Moldova launched a joint project to mobilize church networks to help prevent trafficking. During 2007, an Interdenominational Coalition to Prevent Trafficking was created which, in partnership with IOM, conducted training sessions for more than 700 priests, pastors, and other religious workers across the country. The seminars were aimed at involving religious workers in passing on prevention information to parishioners, identifying victims and potential victims of trafficking, and referring them for assistance.

135. (U) In December 2007, under the aegis of the Interdenominational Coalition, Orthodox (Moldovan and Bessarabian), Baptist and Lutheran churches in the country conducted prayer services for trafficking victims. Information on anti-trafficking programs was announced at services of all these churches on December 2. In addition, a grants mechanism empowered 18 churches to implement community based anti-trafficking projects.

Government Agencies Involved

136. (SBU) The following government agencies were involved in anti-trafficking efforts: The National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons (to be headed by a deputy prime minister, according to law); the inter-agency task force CCTIP; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOI); the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration; the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; the Migration Bureau of the MOI; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child; the Ministry of Economy and Trade; the Customs Service; the National Tourism Agency; the Information and Security Service; the Statistics and Sociology Department; the Information Development Ministry (passport authority); the Border Guards Service; the Center for Combating Economic Crime and Corruption; the Licensing Chamber; and the Prosecutor General Office. The CCTIP has the lead in coordinating and leading GOM efforts against TIP.

137. (SBU) The Ministry of Interior and the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons are responsible for developing anti-trafficking programs within the government. The National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Persons expired at the end of 2006, and the Government has not yet written a new one to cover 2007 or later years.

Investigation and Prosecution

138. (SBU) Trafficking in persons was criminalized under Moldovan law in August 2001. In 2005, amendments to the Criminal Code made the victim's consent to being trafficked irrelevant. In addition, the anti-trafficking legislation was complemented by passage of a comprehensive law on the prevention and combating of trafficking in persons that came into effect in December 2005. The government worked closely with the international community on the law, which

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was studied and approved by the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The law includes a definition of trafficking that is fully consistent with the Palermo Protocol. The law exempts victims from criminal prosecution for illegal acts committed during the trafficking experience, without preconditioning this exemption on the victim's willingness to cooperate with law enforcement authorities, as the previous legislation stipulated. The law also institutes a "reflection period" of 30 days, during which time a victim can decide whether he/she will cooperate with law enforcement in any criminal proceedings against his/her traffickers. Furthermore, the

law establishes obligations for the central and local public authorities to carry out with regard to combating trafficking and assistance of victims of trafficking. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration has been appointed as the main governmental agency responsible for coordinating the repatriation of victims.

139. (SBU) The articles in the current criminal code on trafficking in persons and trafficking in children include the following provisions. (Note: On March 1, 2007, Parliament passed in the first reading a related law on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence. The law was sent to the President, who has not accepted or returned the bill to Parliament at the time this report was written. End note.)

Begin text:

Article 165. Trafficking in human beings, which comprises

(1) Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or acceptance of a person for purposes of commercial or non-commercial sexual exploitation, forced work or services, slavery or any forms of servitude, use of persons in armed conflicts, transplantation of organs, or tests on human beings, as well as for use of persons in criminal activities, committed through:

- a) Threatening or use of physical violence not dangerous for life and health of the person, including that through kidnapping, seizure of documents, and servitude, in order to return debts, the limits and size of which are not set in a reasonable mode;
- b) Deception;
- c) Abuse of power, payment or receipt of charges or benefits, in order to get consent of a person who controls other persons, or abuse of vulnerability,

is punished with imprisonment from seven to fifteen years.

(2) Actions listed in paragraph (1) of this article that were:

- a) Committed repeatedly;
- b) Against two or more persons;
- c) Against pregnant women; committed
- d) By two or more persons
- f) By a public servant or a senior public servant;
- g) By use of torture, inhuman treatment, or degrading treatment in order to place persons under control either through violence, rape, physical dependence, use of weapons, threat of disclosure of confidential information of the person's family, or other persons,

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as well as through other means,

are punished with imprisonment from ten to twenty years.
Legal entities can be fined 100,000 to 140,000 lei (approximately USD 8,900 to 12,500).

(3) Actions named in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this article:

- a) Committed by an organized criminal group or criminal organization;
- b) Resulting in death or serious bodily or mental injuries to a person,

are punished with imprisonment from fifteen to twenty-five years or with life imprisonment.

Article 206. Trafficking in children

(1) Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or acceptance of a child or renting, receiving payments or benefits for obtaining consent of a person who controls the

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child for purposes of:

- a) Commercial or non-commercial sexual exploitation,
- b) Forced labor or services;
- c) Slavery or any forms of servitude, including illegal adoption;
- d) Use of a child in armed conflicts;
- e) Use of a child in criminal activities;
- f) Transplantation of organs, or tissues for transplant;
- g) Abandoning him/her abroad,

is punished with imprisonment from ten to fifteen years.

(2) Actions listed in paragraph (1) of this article, accompanied by:

- a) Use of physical or psychological violence against a child;
- b) Sexual abuse of the child, commercial or non-commercial sexual exploitation;
- c) Use of torture, inhuman treatment, or degrading treatment in order to ensure subordination of the child either through violence, rape, physical dependence, use of weapons, threat of disclosure of confidential information of the child's family, or other persons;
- d) Enslavement, or conditions similar to slavery;
- e) Use of the child in armed conflicts;
- f) Transplantation of organs or tissues for transplant,

are punished by imprisonment from fifteen to twenty years.

(3) Actions listed in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this article:

- a) Committed repeatedly;
- b) Committed against two or more children;
- c) Committed by an organized criminal group or criminal organization;
- d) Resulting in death or serious bodily or mental injuries of a child,

are punished with imprisonment from twenty to twenty five years or life imprisonment.

End text.

140. (U) In December 2005, the Criminal Code was amended to allow the prosecution of those who organize illegal migration. In addition, Moldova has criminal code articles on forced labor, slavery and slavery-like conditions, illegal transport of children out of the country (art. 206 CC), and forced removal of organs or tissues to be used in transplant operations (art. 158 CC). (Note: The Kidney Foundation of Moldova reported that, according to its knowledge, 32 people were trafficked from Moldova for organ retrieval. End note.) In 2007, authorities used these anti-trafficking articles and preexisting anti-trafficking laws in criminal cases. They also targeted suspected traffickers with criminal charges of pimping and document forging. All of these laws cover both internal and external trafficking. The penalty for trafficking varies from seven years to life in prison.

Active Investigation by Government

141. (SBU) The Government's investigation of trafficking is largely limited to low- and mid-level crimes. In 2007, the CCTIP sent a female undercover agent to be "trafficked" from Moldova to Cyprus. After she reported on the identities of traffickers and victims she encountered on her journey, law enforcement officers from CCTIP and Cyprus arrested traffickers and freed five victims in a joint operation.

142. (SBU) Although the law on operative investigators was amended in February of 2004 to expand investigators' ability to work undercover and to use advanced techniques such as electronic surveillance, investigators have not yet taken full advantage of this authority and did not use the techniques to follow investigations up the chain to apprehend high-level or governmental targets. Mitigated punishment for cooperating suspects is available to prosecutors

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under current Moldovan law, but the procedure is used largely to dispose of uncontested cases rather than as an investigative tool.

143. (SBU) Following the provisions of the Letter of Agreement on Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement signed in 2001 between the U.S. Government and the Government of Moldova, the U.S. Government funded the renovation of the Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons, installing specially designed office furniture and modern computer hardware and software. The U.S. Embassy developed a comprehensive training plan for CCTIP staff, which includes interview and interrogation techniques, task/strike force management, ethics and public corruption, information technology training, officer safety and survival, and crime-scene management.

Punishment for Labor Trafficking Offenses

144. (U) The Criminal Code criminalizes forced or bonded labor and involuntary servitude, the penalties ranging from fines to up to ten years of imprisonment (art. 167 on slavery, and art. 168 on forced labor).

145. (U) The anti-trafficking statute (art. 165), under the definition of trafficking in persons, also regulates "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a person for the purpose of labor exploitation or services, in slavery or similar conditions." Moreover, the Moldovan Criminal Code criminalizes forced or bonded labor and slavery and conditions similar to slavery as separate crimes. Therefore, when a person is charged with trafficking in persons for forced labor purposes, the defendant also faces additional charges of forced labor or slavery and conditions similar to slavery. Upon sentencing, the courts may combine the penalty prescribed for trafficking in persons (minimum: 7 years of imprisonment; maximum: detention for life) with the one prescribed for forced labor (minimum: fines or 3 years of imprisonment; maximum: 10 years of imprisonment). As a consequence, the imposed penalties for trafficking in persons for forced labor exploitation may vary from 7 to 12 years or from 15 to 22 years of imprisonment.

Penalties for Rape or Forcible Sexual Assault

146. (U) The penalty for rape or forcible sexual assault is three years to life in prison. According to the law, the lowest penalty for trafficking (seven years in prison) is higher than for the lowest penalty for rape. The highest penalty (life in prison) is the same for both crimes.

Is Prostitution Legalized or Decriminalized?

147. (SBU) Prostitution is not criminalized, but it is an administrative offense punished by 30 days' detention if practiced repeatedly. Clients are not punished. Pimping is criminalized and the law is enforced with penalties ranging from two to seven years of incarceration. Traditionally, many cases that began as

trafficking cases were eventually downgraded to pimping; lack of solid evidence and refusal of the victim to testify were often cited by prosecutors and investigators.

Government Prosecution of Cases against Traffickers

148. (SBU) In 2007, the CCTIP, together with the Prosecutor General Office, released statistics regarding investigations, arrests and convictions for TIP. The PGO reported the number of cases opened (507) in 2007. CCTIP reported the number of cases sent to the prosecutor (496). The PGO reported that 226 were sent to the courts, while CCTIP reported a more up-to-date 250. The PGO added two categories not present in the CCTIP report: organizing begging and taking children out of the country illegally. Only the PGO reports convictions (233), and convictions that carry penalties (220, including 50 undefined prison terms, 153 undefined fines, and 17 undefined suspensions of punishment). Within the TIP category, PGO reporting does not categorize the types and extent of crimes committed. PGO reporting also does not identify the number of

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trafficking cases downgraded to pimping or show correspondence between the numbers of persons receiving punishment and the crimes for which they were being punished.

149. (SBU) The CCTIP and Ministry of Interior units eradicated 40 trafficking networks of trafficking and illegal migration in 2007, including 22 networks of sexual exploitation, two networks of labor exploitation, thirteen networks of organized illegal migration to the Schengen states, and one network forcing people to engage in begging.

150. (SBU) CCTIP conducted 235 raids in 2007 to inspect 301 travel and employment agencies. The CCTIP withdrew the licenses of 16 companies for suspected trafficking and illegal migration.

151. (SBU) On June 20, 2006, police arrested Alexander Covali, the alleged leader of the largest trafficking ring in Moldova, and charged him with trafficking after finding confined women on his properties. He was released on bail and arrested again on August 4, 2006, when an investigation revealed that he had received police protection. He remained in jail at year's end awaiting a court hearing.

152. (SBU) On December 27, 2006, Moldovan citizen Ion Gusin was convicted of trafficking in persons and sentenced to 22 years in jail for his role as pimp and translator for a foreign sex tourist.

153. (SBU) A joint project of the Supreme Court of Justice and the RLA to review closed trafficking files for 2004-2005 disclosed that in many cases judges suspended sentences because of "extraordinary" circumstances (suspension of sentence is not otherwise permissible in trafficking cases), such as the defendant being pregnant or having children under eight. As many traffickers are women, this accounts for a significant number of the cases in which traffickers were not serving sentences.

154. (SBU) Prosecutors reported that the high number of light and suspended sentences is partly the result of the poor quality of investigations and partly of corruption in the judiciary, which often downgrades trafficking charges to pimping and hands down what many consider to be light sentences. However, for the period covered by the study, 2004-2005, prosecutors themselves, in 44 percent of the cases filed under trafficking statutes, requested downgrading charges originally filed under the trafficking statutes to less severe crimes; 35 percent were reduced to pimping charges and 9 percent to other charges such as forced labor, illegal business activities, or organizing begging, all charges which carry milder penalties than charges for trafficking. Prosecutors and investigators alike complained that reducing trafficking charges to pimping charges is often required by the refusal of victims to cooperate with law enforcement.

Specialized Training

155. (SBU) The Police Academy has included a regular segment on trafficking in its curriculum developed in conjunction with the NGO La Strada. Members of the Supreme Court of Justice and the PGO participated in training sessions organized by OSCE that also included speakers from NGOs and the Embassy's Regional Legal Advisor's office. In January and February 2007, Moldovan investigators and prosecutors attended five training sessions on combating trafficking in persons that were provided at the Police Academy. Employees of the CCTIP received professional training at the Police Academy. The Ministry of Internal Affairs organized thirty seminars and professional training sessions on trafficking for its employees throughout the raions. In 2007, CCTIP officers participated in nine international conferences, eight seminars provided by international organizations, and six working-group meetings which were dedicated to preventing and combating trafficking in persons and illegal migration.

Inter-Governmental Cooperation

156. (SBU) The government attempted to cooperate with other governments on investigation and prosecution of TIP cases. The

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results depended in part on the other country's response. Moldova

is a member of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) and the Southeast Europe Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG), the prosecutors' corollary organization to SECI. During 2007, the government also had a Moldovan officer assigned to the SECI Center in Bucharest who passed information through the SECI Center and Interpol. During the year, the government improved cooperation with other member countries of SECI and Interpol and with other trafficking destination countries such as Italy and Turkey, resulting in a number of convictions in Moldova. The government sent quarterly reports to the U.S. Embassy on cases under investigation. In an undercover operation involving CCTIP personnel and law enforcement officers from Cyprus and Moldova, five Moldovan trafficking victims were identified and freed. The victims had been deceived by a Moldovan travel agency, stripped of their identification and exploited sexually.

157. (U) On February 8, 2006, the government ratified an agreement with Turkey to combat trafficking as part of a broader effort to fight illegal drug trafficking, international terrorism, and other organized crime. On June 20, 2007, the government signed a bilateral agreement with Slovakia on combating organized crime. In 2007, the government began negotiations on bilateral agreements on combating TIP with the UAE. At an April 26-27, 2007, meeting, senior law enforcement officials from Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine negotiated a trilateral agreement to establish an anti-TIP headquarters in Romania.

158. (SBU) Between 2005 and 2007, CCTIP, all Moldovan agencies collaborating in the CCTIP task force, the Embassy and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency, cooperated in a joint international criminal investigation of American citizen Anthony Mark Bianchi. Bianchi was charged under a 2003 federal law that makes it illegal for Americans to commit sexual crimes against children in foreign countries. The two-year investigation resulted in Bianchi's August 2007 conviction at the Federal Court in Philadelphia on all ten counts against him: traveling in foreign commerce for the purpose of engaging in illicit sexual conduct (four counts), engaging in illicit sexual conduct in a foreign place (three counts), using a facility in foreign commerce to entice a minor to engage in sexual activity (two counts), and conspiracy (one count).

Ratification of International Instruments

159. (U) Parliament ratified ILO Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor in February 2002.

--Parliament ratified ILO Convention 29 in October 1999; it entered into force in March 2001.

--ILO Convention 105 was ratified in March 1993.

--The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed in February 2002, but has not yet been ratified.

--Parliament ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, on February 17, 2005.

Extradition

160. (SBU) Persons who are charged with trafficking in other countries can be extradited only on the basis of an international treaty to which the Republic of Moldova is a party or on terms of reciprocity according to a judicial decision. Although such treaties do exist between Moldova and many countries, there have been no extraditions for trafficking cases. Citizens of the Republic of Moldova and persons who have been granted political asylum by the Republic of Moldova cannot be extradited from the country if they have committed the crime abroad but are subject to criminal liability in Moldova under the present code. We know of no current efforts to modify Moldovan law to permit extradition of its

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own nationals.

Government Involvement in or Tolerance of Trafficking

161. (SBU) As noted above, many observers suspect that the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Anti-Trafficking Unit was self-limiting in the cases it investigated because of pressure, tacit or overt, from corrupt or complicit officials at higher levels in the ministry and government. However, we have no direct proof of ongoing high-level government involvement in trafficking.

Prosecution of Government Officials

162. (SBU) As noted above, on October 18, 2006, the Ministry of Interior dismissed several senior officials for trafficking, including a former CCTIP deputy director, Ion Bejan, who was under investigation on charges of protecting a major trafficker, Alexandru Covali. According to the ministry, other government investigators and prosecutors were also involved in the protection scheme and are under investigation. The GOM has not shared information with the international community about the Bejan case. The U.S. Embassy requested info regarding the case status from Moldovan officials but it not received an official reply to date.

Child Sex Tourism

163. (SBU) Of the 61 investigations launched by CCTIP under the trafficking in children statute, one high-profile case involved U.S. citizen Mark Anthony Bianchi and Moldovan citizen Ion Gusin. (See para. 58 above.) On the basis of this case, the CCTIP launched 17 criminal investigations under the child trafficking, violent acts of sexual nature, forced sexual relations, and perverse acts articles of the Criminal Code. The CCTIP worked jointly with U.S. officials in the investigation and prosecution of Bianchi, who was charged under a 2003 U.S. federal law that makes it illegal for Americans to commit sexual crimes against children in foreign countries. Eight of the victims from Moldova and four CCTIP officers traveled to Philadelphia in July 2007 to testify in a U.S. federal court, before an American jury, against Mr. Bianchi.

Protection of and Assistance to Victims

164. (SBU) Moldova currently does not have active arrangements with other countries on the provision of temporary residence status for foreign-national victims of trafficking. In December 2006, the Rehabilitation Center of the IOM was transferred to government ownership and responsibility; the IOM will cover operating costs for the next seven years. Legal, medical, and psychological services are provided mainly by international organizations and NGOs. The IOM Rehabilitation Center is the only comprehensive victim assistance facility in the country. Various ministries have cooperated with NGOs and international organizations to support their assistance efforts. For example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs signed a Memorandum of Collaboration with the IOM to ensure that victims of trafficking repatriated through the IOM are not apprehended by border guards to be transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs for interrogation, but allowed to go straight to the IOM Rehabilitation Center.

165. (SBU) During the second half of 2006, in response to the lack of services available to victims of trafficking outside the capital, the MSP (formerly part of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, which split in two at the beginning of 2007) began to develop the National Referral System for Protection and Assistance of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking (NRS), which works through multi-disciplinary teams. These teams bring together local authorities and civil society actors overseen by Focal Points working under the umbrella of the National Coordination Unit within the Equal Opportunity and Prevention of Violence Department of the MSP. The NRS is a direct consequence of the Moldovan Government's efforts in institutional and law reform and builds on the cooperation already established between the government and IOM in facilitating the repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of trafficking victims into Moldovan society. In 2006 the NRS was

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piloted in five raions and extended to seven more during the second half of 2007.

166. (SBU) The raion-level coordination mechanisms (multi-disciplinary teams) have been strengthened through continuous support from the NRS and IOM social workers. The multidisciplinary teams in the pilot raions and in new NRS raions have been supplied with separate phone lines, internet access, computers, and stationery. Some were also provided with furniture, and some coordinators of multidisciplinary teams are attending computer courses.

167. (SBU) Between June 2006 and December 2007, 162 persons were assisted within the NRS. Of these, 115 (66 victims of trafficking and 49 persons at risk) were referred through the NRS from the five pilot raions whose officials were trained in 2006. From the seven raions where training took place in 2007, 31 persons (nine victims and 22 persons at risk) were referred. Another 16 persons were assisted through the NRS in raions in which formal instruction in providing direct assistance had not yet been provided.

Government Funding for NGOs

168. (SBU) The government provides no funding to NGOs for victim assistance, although it has cooperated with NGOs and international assistance programs. In December 2006, the government gave a rent-free building to IOM for use as a rehabilitation center.

169. (SBU) In the framework of the "Better Opportunities for Youth and Women" project, implemented by UNDP and financed by USAID, cooperation agreements were made with the local public administrations of Ungheni, Carpineni, Edinet, Drochia, Cahul and Soroca, under which buildings were donated free of charge to the implementing NGOs for a period of 25 years for use as social-reintegration centers.

Law Enforcement Systems for Identifying Victims

170. (SBU) During 2007, the MSP and the IOM expanded the implementation of the national referral system aimed at assisting the victims of trafficking and those at risk, and to ensure long-term rehabilitation and reintegration services. During 2007, the initiative was implemented in seven more raions.

Respect for Rights of Victims

171. (SBU) In 2007, the government drafted with the NGO community a memorandum on standard operating procedures pertaining to alien smuggling and the assistance of trafficking victims. The parties involved are: Ministry of Interior, Prosecutor General Office,

Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child, IOM, Center for Combating Trafficking in Women, and La Strada. The memorandum delineates the commitments of all state agencies and NGOs party to this document and will be signed by March 2008 by government ministers. Most NGOs agree that the government's treatment of victims continued to improve over the last few years. The counter-trafficking law exempts victims from criminal prosecution for illegal acts committed during the trafficking experience. Under previous legislation, exemption from prosecution was preconditioned on the victim's willingness to cooperate with law enforcement authorities.

Government Encouragement of Victims to Assist Investigations

172. (SBU) The government encouraged victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking; however, insufficient measures were in place to provide for the victims' safety. This deficiency deters many from cooperating with the police. Under Moldovan law, a victim can obtain restitution through criminal proceedings, but only if the victim requests it.

Victim and Witness Protection

173. (SBU) Moldova passed a witness protection law in 1998, but its provisions have not been fully implemented. In some cases, police

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have posted guards outside witnesses' homes. Generally, the system of protection is weak and many victims do not feel secure enough to take action against their traffickers. Because the government has not provided sufficient victim/witness protection, some organizations such as IOM and CPTW have begun to take steps to protect witnesses in guarded apartments in undisclosed locations, where victims can stay before and during trials.

174. (SBU) The new Anti-TIP Law requires the government to provide protection for victims and witnesses. The CCTIP has a special unit for witness and victim protection, which is being developed in coordination with the RLA.

Government Training for Officials

175. (BU) The government accepts specialized training modules provided by local NGOs and international organizations on recognizing trafficking, the provision of assistance to victims, and the special needs of trafficked children. During 2007, CCTIP officers attended eight training sessions offered by Austrian Ministry of Interior, three on combating human trafficking provided by EUBAM, and three on law enforcement organized by ILO.

176. (SBU) Employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs assigned to the CCTIP attended professional training provided by the Moldovan Government at the Police Academy in 2007.

177. (SBU) The Ministry of Internal Affairs organized 30 seminars and professional training units for its employees all over Moldova. Together with the Prosecutor General Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs also conducted five training sessions on combating trafficking in persons and illegal migration that took place at the Police Academy.

178. (SBU) The MFA, in partnership with IOM, launched a project in January 2007 to develop the capacity of Consular Department personnel assigned to Moldovan embassies abroad to assist potential and actual Moldovan victims of trafficking. Through the project, IOM assisted consular staff in developing migrant community networks in destination countries, through which information could be disseminated. Further goals of the project are: to raise awareness and increase understanding of the risks and consequences of irregular migration and trafficking; to enhance the effectiveness of Moldovan consular officers to identify trafficked victims and to provide counseling and assistance to trafficking victims in transit and receiving countries; to standardize a repatriation mechanism for identified trafficking victims; and to develop a database at the MFA of repatriated victims to enhance counter-trafficking policy analysis and development. On January 30, 2008, the Cabinet adopted the 2008 National Action Plan on protection of Moldovan citizens abroad. The Plan provides for the opening of additional consular missions in Ireland, Spain and Turkey.

Government Assistance to Repatriated Nationals

179. (SBU) The government provided limited assistance, such as medical aid, shelter, or financial help, to its repatriated nationals who are identified as victims of trafficking. At the same time, the MFA, specifically its Consular Department, has taken a more active role in facilitating the return process. Moldovan consulates abroad issued laissez-passer documents free of charge for victims of trafficking and closely cooperated with IOM Missions and consulates of other states in countries where there is no Moldovan mission (e.g., UAE, Syria) to ease the return procedure for Moldovan victims of trafficking.

180. (SBU) The new anti-trafficking law and the related plan of action identify the Ministry of Health and Social Protection as the key government agency in delivering direct assistance to victims of trafficking. While the MSP was not prepared to integrate these responsibilities under the law in its 2006 budget, it has requested additional funding for assisting victims of trafficking for the 2007 budget.

IOs and NGOs Working with Victims

181. (SBU) CPTW provided free legal assistance to victims in both criminal cases and civil matters, and organized workshops and seminars on legal assistance for law enforcement from regions. La Strada Moldova provided informational and educational services and a national toll-free hotline. NGOs Contact Gagauzia and Compasiune supported small business initiatives aimed at reintegration of victims. Save the Children operated reintegration programs, including a school teaching parental skills. IOM helped the government in the operation of the rehabilitation center which offers victims medical aid, psychological services and legal aid. IOM Chisinau worked closely with the MSP and NGO Terre des Hommes to repatriate minors from the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

182. (SBU) UNICEF supported a child-friendly wing at the IOM rehabilitation center. UNICEF also supported a project implemented by Terre des Hommes to repatriate and assist Moldovan children trafficked to Russia. The Italian NGO Consortium of Solidarity implemented a micro-grant project for victims of trafficking. UNDP supported a network of self-sustaining transitional-living and educational "social-reintegration centers" to reduce the vulnerability of returned trafficking victims and state boarding school and orphanage graduates to the criminal trade in human beings. Many of these organizations worked closely with the government; however, several noted that the level of cooperation they receive from the GOM depends on what the GOM perceives it will get from the collaboration. UNDP has received the support of several local public administrations in the form of space donation for the centers.

183. (SBU) IOM reported a particularly good working relationship with the Ministry Social Protection, Family, and Child; the Ministry of Economy and Trade, especially its National Employment Agency, which has offered free vocational training and professional orientation opportunities to victims; and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which has increasingly referred victims for assistance. IOM noted that in the last year the Ministry of Education became more cooperative in areas of assistance and reintegration of victims. Catholic Relief Services offered employment training and job placement for women at risk, and Winrock International established five regional support centers to provide leadership training and legal and social assistance to young women at risk.

Prevention and Government Acknowledgement of the Problem

184. (SBU) The government acknowledged, both publicly and privately, that trafficking was a problem. However, some high-level officials expressed the opinion that a significant percentage of cases considered to be "trafficking" by NGOs in Moldova were in fact cases of migrant smuggling or situations in which women and girls succumbed to recruiting efforts on a voluntary basis. Government officials did not engage in public campaigns against trafficking.

Government-run anti-Trafficking Campaigns

185. (SBU) In an effort to increase public awareness related to trafficking in human beings, CCTIP, with local and international NGOs and IOs, developed and conducted seminars for high students, teaching staff from schools and universities, priests, local authorities and local law enforcement officials. During 2007, CCTIP conducted 18 seminars with the Center for Combating Trafficking in Women in different raions of Moldova, and, with IOM, organized three seminars for religious workers to help them advocate against trafficking and enhance prevention.

186. (SBU) In 2007, CCTIP organized two conferences with local NGOs Femida and APDAF in Chisinau and Causeni, training local lawyers, teaching staff, and social workers. CCTIP also offered two seminars to university students on the consolidation of law enforcement capacities in combating trafficking in persons and cooperation with civil society. CCTIP conducted three national conferences, one of them dedicated to the Bianchi case and efforts made to fight sexual child exploitation. CCTIP leadership provided frequent TV interviews to update viewers on CCTIP operations and increase awareness regarding the consequences of human trafficking and illegal migration.

Relationship of Government and Civil Society

187. (SBU) The relationship between the government and NGOs remained fairly good and cooperative. However, most NGOs expressed a degree of frustration with the government, feeling that it took advantage of the NGO community and international donor support while not taking enough initiative of its own to fight trafficking. Nevertheless, there was a general consensus among NGOs that the GOM was making progress in meeting its responsibilities and taking over some activities from NGOs. See below, "Protection and Assistance to Victims."

Monitoring Emigration

188. (SBU) In 2004, Pasager, an automated system to monitor borders, was implemented with U.S. support, and is being used by the Border Guards Service to, among other things, combat trafficking in

persons, by monitoring and recording information on individuals crossing the border. Passport scanners are used to detect counterfeit documents. Information introduced into the system using one of the three entry modules for road, air, and railway traffic is stored in a central database. At Chisinau airport, in cooperation with the Ministry of Information Development, the Border Guards Service implemented real-time ID control for Moldovan citizens. In addition, the system has a mechanism for reviewing the most recent entry records and travel history of Moldovan citizens. IOM Moldova carried out training for customs officers, border guards, and police in cooperation with EUBAM in 2007. The training focused on identifying victims of trafficking, interview methods, and referral for assistance.

189. (SBU) The MFA's Consular Office is in the process of developing an electronic database to track the flow of foreign individuals entering or leaving Moldova. At some border crossings, consular offices have been provided with basic computer equipment but needed a real-time connection to headquarters. The U.S. Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program expedited this process by donating additional computer equipment and a server to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration in 2006.

Inter-Agency and Multilateral Coordination -----

190. (SBU) With U.S. Government support, the Government of Moldova opened in January 2005 the multi-agency Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP), which includes the International Anti-trafficking Analytical Bureau and the Victim/Witness Protection Program. CCTIP is a task force, drawn from numerous GOM ministries, of prosecutors, investigators, analysts and support personnel created to combat trafficking in persons. The CCTIP was officially inaugurated in April 2007. The U.S. Embassy has installed specially designed office furniture, modern IT hardware, and computer software. CCTIP has a fully-equipped modern conference room, and is being used as a training facility for many courses, seminars and international round table discussions.

191. (SBU) The U.S. Embassy and CCTIP have developed a comprehensive training plan for CCTIP staff and for TIP police officers from raions. The plan includes interview and interrogation techniques, task/strike force management, ethics and public corruption, IT training, officer safety and survival, and crime scene management. In an effort to support task force methodology, the Embassy sent senior CCTIP personnel and law enforcement officers from participating agencies to the United States for special training in November 2007. The delegation met with officials from G/TIP of the Department of State, the Department of Justice, FBI, DHS/ICE and NGOs engaged in preventing human trafficking.

192. (SBU) The National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons brings together ministries and agencies dealing with the issue. The National Committee's four working groups--on prevention, protection, prosecution, and child trafficking--have international and NGO participation as well. There is also currently a multi-agency task force under the leadership of the Prosecutor General Office to monitor law enforcement activities and to advise on prosecuting

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complex cases.

193. (SBU) In 2002, the government created a stand-alone anti-corruption agency reporting directly to the Prime Minister. This agency, the Center for Combating Economic Crime and Corruption, has a staff of over 600 and was designed to centralize all investigations of corruption to prevent duplication of effort among agencies. One staff member is assigned to liaise with CCTIP.

National Plan of Action -----

194. (SBU) The GOM approved a new 2005-2006 National Action Plan in August 2005, replacing the outdated 2001 plan, which was overly broad and vague. The new plan was developed by an inter-departmental working group of the GOM with the close collaboration of the anti-trafficking NGO La Strada Moldova. However, it expired at the end of 2006, and the government, in consultation with local and international NGOs, is still drafting a new one.

195. (SBU) The government has made no efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts, beyond banning explicit ads for sexual services in newspapers and magazines. Prostitutes solicit customers on the streets of towns and cities, and brothels reportedly operate in many hotels. As noted above, prostitution is an administrative offense, and clients are not penalized.

196. Post's TIP point of contact is Michael Mates, +373 22 408486, email matesmj@state.gov. Post estimates that it has devoted approximately 70 hours of officer and FSN time to preparing this report.

KIRBY